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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9776  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1215  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4179  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0069  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0028  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0055  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3784  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2060  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0157  
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0015  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7252  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0729  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0914  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0057  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1698  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 002176

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/27/2017  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREF](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PROSECUTOR DEMANDED PAYMENT FROM DEPUTY HOKIM,  
WIFE OF FUGITIVE JOURNALIST

REF: TASHKENT 2147

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: On December 21, poloff met with Gulnora Muradova, the wife of fugitive journalist Shukhrat Muradov and acting Deputy Hokim of Tashkent's Sergeli district. Muradova admitted that her husband was involved in a kickback scheme at the "Na Postu" newspaper, but argued that he was less involved than other individuals. Muradova accused the prosecutor in the case of demanding payment in exchange for the charges to be dropped against her husband. She also confirmed that her husband is currently in Bishkek, but said that he would hold off on seeking asylum status while she tries to pull strings in Tashkent. Separately, Alisher Sharipov, the alleged organizer of the kickback scheme, has resurfaced in Kiev and filed for refugee status there. End summary

WIFE ADMITS HUSBAND INVOLVED IN KICKBACK SCHEME  
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12. (C) On December 21, poloff met with Gulnora Muradova, the wife of fugitive journalist Shukhrat Muradov. Muradova simultaneously serves as acting Deputy Hokim for Women's Issues of Tashkent's Sergeli district and head of its social services department. On December 11, Muradov, a former editor of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' (MVD) "Na Postu" newspaper, was sentenced to several years' imprisonment for corruption while at Na Postu. The judge in the trial allegedly tipped off Muradov's lawyer, Ezgulik Deputy Chairman Abdurakhmon Tashanov, to the verdict before it could be read, enabling Muradov to flee Uzbekistan before he could be incarcerated. Tashanov told poloff on December 11 that

Murodov was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment (reftel), but Muradova told poloff on December 26 that Murodov had been included in the December 2007 amnesty and his prison term was subsequently reduced to 4 and a half years.

13. (C) Contrary to what Tashanov had told poloff on December 11, Muradova admitted her husband's involvement in a kickback scheme while he worked at Na Postu from 2000 to 2005. According to Muradova, her husband was pressured by his superior, former MVD Public Affairs Officer Alisher Sharipov, to arrange contracts with a local newsprint supply company and a German printing equipment firm in exchange for payments passed to Sharipov. According to Muradova, her husband did not want to get involved, but eventually succumbed to Sharipov's pressures and arranged for kickbacks to be paid on "one or two occasions" in the amount of 8 million soum (6,300 dollars.) However, she argued that the volume of kickbacks paid to Sharipov increased exponentially after her husband was fired from his position in August 2005 and replaced by another individual. Sharipov was also investigated for his role in the scheme, but he fled abroad before he could be charged (reftel). The court's lengthy verdict in the Murodov case, a copy of which was provided to poloff by Muradova, notes Murodov's accusations that Sharipov told him to sign contracts without holding the proper tenders.

#### SHARIPOV RESURFACES IN KIEV; REQUESTS ASYLUM

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14. (C) On December 20, consular officer received an email from a DHS immigration officer in Moscow that Sharipov had resurfaced in Kiev and had filed there as a refugee. The independent Uzmestronom website erroneously reported this

summer that Sharipov had fled to the United States (reftel).

#### PROSECUTOR DEMANDED PAYMENT FROM MURADOVA TO DROP CHARGES

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15. (C) Muradova said that she was approached by the prosecutor in the case, Temur Nurmuhamedov, who allegedly demanded payment from Muradova in exchange for dropping the charges against her husband. Without her permission, Nurmuhamedov assessed the value of a house that their family had purchased in Tashkent at 200 million soum (15,740 dollars). He then reportedly told her that her husband could "repay" the money he allegedly stole by signing over the house. Muradova refused to surrender the house, as it was her family's major financial investment and her children's inheritance. Muradova, corroborating what Tashanov had earlier told poloff, said that the charges against another defendant in the case were dropped after the individual "repaid" the amount that he allegedly stole from the newspaper.

16. (C) After she refused to give up her home, Muradova said that Nurmuhamedov tried to ratchet up the pressure by calling the supervisor who oversees her work at the social services department and accusing her and her husband of financial improprieties. Muradova said that her boss refused to listen to the accusations and instead defended her. However, Muradova was afraid that Nurmuhamedov would still try to contact the Sergeli District Hokim and would try to have her removed as acting Deputy Hokim.

17. (C) Muradova denied that her husband stole money from the newspaper to build the family's house in Tashkent. Instead, she largely inherited the money to buy the property from her father, who she described as being "quite wealthy." Muradova also denied a rumor circulated by the independent Uzmestronom website that her husband had purchased another property in Samarkand.

#### MURADOVA CONFIRMS HUSBAND IS IN BISHKEK; HOLDING OFF ON CLAIMING ASYLUM

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18. (C) Muradova reported that she had spoken over the phone

with her husband on several occasions since he fled the country. She confirmed that he is currently in Bishkek and staying with acquaintances of Tashanov. She said that her husband took money with him and is able to support himself at present.

¶9. (C) According to Muradova, her husband will seek refugee status with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Bishkek only as a last resort. Muradova said that she planned to personally appeal to Supreme Court Chairman Barotosh Mustafayev. Muradova admitted that she did not know Mustafayev, but believed that he was an "honest and reasonable" man and she was hopeful that he would consider her husband's appeal. She also planned to appeal for assistance from the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman. However, if these approaches failed, Muradova said that she would also be forced to flee Uzbekistan along with her three children and seek refugee status with her husband in Bishkek.

#### MURADOVA TEMPORARILY FILLING IN AS DEPUTY HOKIM

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¶10. (C) Muradova said that she had spent the last 20 years working in Sergeli district's social services department, gradually rising over the years to become its director in ¶2004. In September, she was tapped by the district's Hokim, who she said was impressed by her energy and dedication, to fill in as acting Deputy Hokim for Women's Issues until next June. Despite her husband's difficulties, Muradova is still hopeful that her elevation to Deputy Hokim will eventually be made permanent (Comment: Muradova came off as more sincere and less polished than most other Deputy Hokims poloff has encountered, possibly belying her recent elevation to the post. End comment.)

#### COMMENT

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¶11. This provides valuable insight into the endemic corruption permeating Uzbek society. While Muradova freely admits that her husband was involved in the kickback scheme, in her mind, he is still innocent because he was only "lightly" involved compared to other persons. Likewise, the prosecutor investigating the allegations of corruption reportedly demanded payment from Muradova, and it appears likely that he received such a bribe from another defendant in the case. Muradova believes that her husband was targeted because she comes from a well-off family and holds a potentially lucrative position as Deputy Hokim. We believe this is plausible.

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